

## St John the Evangelist Episcopal Church

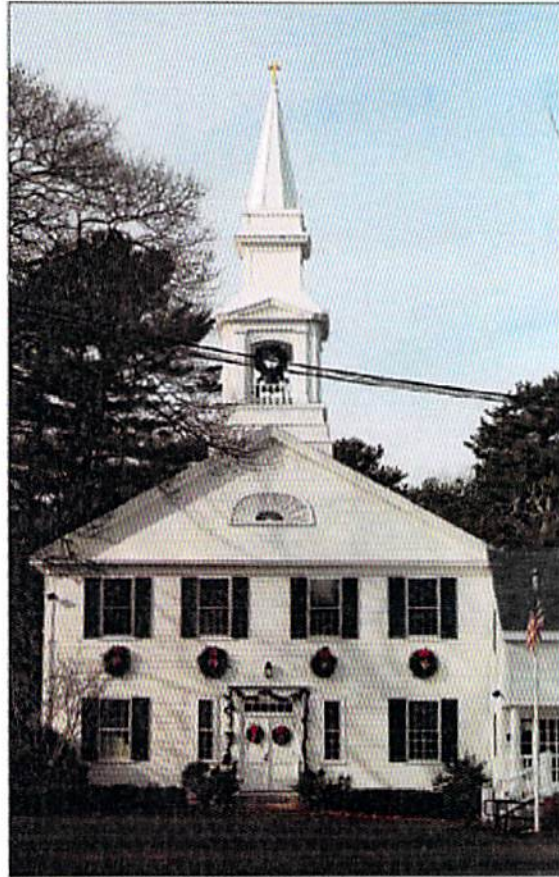
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CLIPPER REPORTER

*The following is the first in a series examining the history and role of churches and houses of worship in Duxbury.*

Sitting back on Washington Street across the street from the former Battelle Laboratories and next door to Pilgrim Church is a white-steepled, traditional New England place of worship – St. John the Evangelist Episcopal church.

St. John's parish occupies a church that has been in Duxbury since 1823 and continues to take an active role in the community today. From Tuesday morning yoga to Thursday morning coffee at Foodies' grocery store and community dinners once a month, the parish is actively involved in the lives of many in Duxbury and beyond. "We believe we live out our faith in our daily lives," said Rev. Roy Tripp, rector of the parish. "We believe it is best lived out in community."

Although officially established as an Episcopal congregation in 1895, the building started out as a Methodist meeting house. Before the Civil War, membership split apart due to disagreements about slavery. Many church members left during those arguments in 1840-1850s and then built neighboring Pilgrim Church next door.



**The building housing St. John the Evangelist Church started life in 1823 as a Methodist meeting house.**

Photos by Mary McKenzie

Membership then dwindled in the former meeting house and the doors were shuttered for more than 40 years. Then in 1881, a group of Duxbury Episcopalians organized and began meeting at houses in the community and an old school building on Chapel Street. The group struggled to have a priest visit regularly to lead services, particularly during winter months. Member Lucy Sprague Sampson finally found the group a home when she purchased the former Methodist meeting house for \$25 in 1895 and organized regular visits from the Society of the Mission Priests of St. John the Evangelist, hence the church was named St. John the Evangelist. St. John's community center, Sprague Hall, built in 1955, is named after that founding member. The church grew in membership and in the 1940s, **Reverend Roy Tripp** is as Duxbury became more of a suburban commuter town, the church hired full-time clergy. In 1999, St. John's built an administrative wing, to accommodate offices and meeting rooms. Today, the church community is vibrant and actively involved in Duxbury and charities throughout the South Shore, New Orleans and Honduras.



**Reverend Roy Tripp is the rector of St. John's parish**

Some examples include the following:

- A youth group for high school and middle school students that meets monthly for dinner and prayer and offers a yearly (April break) mission trip.
- Middle schoolers who make bagged lunches for Father Bills Mainspring Brockton once a month to provide homeless and/or hungry visitors with a meal to go. They also help out with Sunday School, held during church services in classrooms below Sprague Hall.
- A group of adults who travel to Honduras once a year to work in El Hogar School and help people in that community.
- Adults who make food and or serve lunches on the third Sunday of every month at Father Bills Mainspring Brockton.
- On Tuesday mornings at 9 a.m., the church hosts yoga class.
- On the last Thursday of every month, the church hosts a community dinner: the doors are open to whomever would like to attend.
- On the first Monday of every month, St John's community meets in a local restaurant to eat and discuss issues of faith, an outing Father Roy Tripp refers to as "God on Tap."
- Every Thursday morning at 8:30 a.m. at Foodies grocery store, Tripp meets with people from the parish and the community and grabs a coffee.

When someone noted crayons and coloring books at the entry to the church, Tripp said it was part of the church's approach to make it easier for families with young children to attend services. "We try and reach people where they are on their faith journey," he said. "We place a great deal of emphasis on faith development at all ages."



**A small cemetery is located behind the church on Washington St.**



**A painting of Madonna and child at St. Johns.**